

IN THE CLAIMS:

1 - 8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) A process for the production of a graft-copolymerized natural rubber latex which comprises deproteinizing natural rubber latex and then graft-copolymerizing the natural rubber latex.

10. (Previously Presented) A process for the production of an epoxidized natural rubber latex which comprises deproteinizing natural rubber latex and then epoxidizing the natural rubber latex.

11. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.10 % by weight.

12. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 10, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.10 % by weight.

13. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex is graft copolymerized with an organic compound having an unsaturated bond selected from the group consisting of methacrylic acid, acrylic

acid, methyl methacrylate, methyl acrylate, 2-hydroxyethylmethacrylate, acrylonitrile, vinyl acetate, styrene, acrylamide and vinylpyrrolidone.

14. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9 wherein the graft copolymerization step has a graft efficiency of 62.7% or more.

15. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.05 % by weight.

16. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 9, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.02 % by weight.

17. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 10, wherein the epoxidation step has an epoxidation rate which is sufficient to produce an epoxidized deproteinized natural rubber latex having an epoxidation ratio of 26.0% or more in 5 hours.

18. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 10, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.05 % by weight.

19. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 10, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.02 % by weight.

20. (Previously Presented) A method of producing a modified natural rubber latex comprising,

step (i) - combining protease with a natural rubber latex,

step (ii) - washing the product of step (i) with a non-ionic surfactant to give a deproteinized natural rubber latex having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight, wherein said deproteinized natural rubber latex does not exhibit an absorption band at 3280 cm^{-1} in the infrared spectrum, and

step (iii) - graft copolymerizing the deproteinized natural rubber latex by combining the deproteinized natural rubber latex with methyl methacrylate, a peroxide initiator and tetraethylenepentamine to form the modified natural rubber latex.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of producing a modified natural rubber latex comprising,

step (i) - combining protease with a natural rubber latex,

step (ii) - washing the product of step (i) with a non-ionic surfactant to give a deproteinized natural rubber latex having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight, wherein said

deproteinized natural rubber latex does not exhibit an absorption band at 3280 cm^{-1} in the infrared spectrum, and

step (iii) - epoxidizing the deproteinized natural rubber latex by combining the deproteinized natural rubber latex with a nonionic surfactant, and a peracid to form the modified natural rubber latex.

22. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 20, wherein the graft copolymerization step has a graft efficiency of 62.7% or more.

23. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 20, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.05 % by weight.

24. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 20, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.02 % by weight.

25. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 21, wherein the epoxidation step has an epoxidation rate which is sufficient to produce an epoxidized deproteinized natural rubber latex having an epoxidation ratio of 26.0% or more in 5 hours.

26. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 21, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.05 % by weight.

27. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 21, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber latex has a nitrogen content of less than 0.02 % by weight.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) A The modified natural rubber of claim 1, obtained by a modification of a deproteinized natural rubber having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight; wherein said modification is either of:

A) graft copolymerizing said deproteinized natural rubber with 2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate, said modified natural rubber having a graft efficiency of 62.7% or more; or

B) epoxidizing said deproteinized natural rubber with trifluoroperacetic acid, wherein an epoxidation rate is sufficient to produce a modified deproteinized natural rubber having an epoxidation ratio of 26.0% or more in 5 hours.

30. (Currently Amended) A The modified natural rubber of claim 1, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber is graft copolymerized

obtained by a modification of a deproteinized natural rubber having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight; wherein said modification is a graft copolymerization of said deproteinized natural rubber with methyl methacrylate in the presence of t-butyl hydroperoxide, and tetraethylenepentamine, said modified natural rubber having a graft efficiency of 62.7% or more and a nonionic surfactant.

31. (Currently Amended) A The modified natural rubber of claim 1, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber is epoxidized obtained by a modification of a deproteinized natural rubber having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight; wherein said modification is an epoxidation of the deproteinized natural rubber with hydrogen peroxide and formic acid or glacial acetic acid, wherein an epoxidation rate is sufficient to produce a modified deproteinized natural rubber having an epoxidation ratio of 26.0% or more in 5 hours in the presence of a nonionic surfactant.

32. (Currently Amended) A The modified natural rubber of claim 1, wherein the deproteinized natural rubber is graft copolymerized obtained by a modification of a deproteinized natural rubber having a nitrogen content of less than 0.10% by weight; wherein said modification is a graft copolymerization of said deproteinized natural rubber with styrene in the presence of t-butyl

hydroperoxide, and tetraethylenepentamine, said modified natural rubber having a graft efficiency of 62.7% or more ~~and an anionic surfactant.~~